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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses state control over curriculum relative to two general schools of curriculum theorists. The traditionalists employ a behavioristic social science orientation and attempt to develop curriculum theory with laws and principles tested through research. Reconceptualists reject the behavioral science model and attempt to reconceptualize the field of curriculum theory using disciplines such as the arts, literature, religion, and humanistic psychology as a basis for theorizing curriculum. Assumptions and consequences of state control over curriculum in relation to these two broad groups of curriculum theorists are discussed under five major categories: (1) the nature of knowledge, (2) purposes of the explicit curriculum, (3) messages students receive from the implicit curriculum, (4) what is not being taught or the null curriculum, and (5) the planning of curriculum based upon the fundamental elements of the field. Myths about curriculum that must be discarded with the shift in curriculum control to the state are identified. However, the shift of control of the curriculum back to local districts is advocated. A bibliography is included. (WTH)

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State Legislated Curriculum: Assessing the Impact of the Shift in Locus of Authority

Interpretation from the Perspective of a Curriculum Theorist

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Every spring semester I teach a course entitled Curriculum Theory. It is an advanced doctoral level course for majors in curriculum development. Although there are never large numbers of students in such an abstract-sounding course, there are a few particularly hardy souls who persist with me in the curriculum theory course after a required foundation course in curriculum development. My favorite introduction to that course is that most curriculum scholars agree on little, but they all seem to agree that there is no such thing as curriculum theory. Somehow, however, I am expected to explore that topic with them for 16 sessions. Surprisingly enough, I never have any trouble filling those 16 sessions because even though there is no such thing as a curriculum theory, there is a great deal of activity called curriculum theorizing. It is those activities, curriculum theorizing, that I will be addressing today rather than a curriculum theory per se.

Curriculum theorizing consists of attempts to build parts of a curriculum theory which will contribute ultimately to the construction of a comprehensive curriculum theory. It includes such efforts as defining the parameters of curriculum,

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identifying the fundamental elements of curriculum, building models of the field of curriculum, and for some theorists, stating axioms, propositions, and hypotheses of curriculum theory.

Beyond the general agreement that there is no such thing as curriculum theory, however, little agreement has been reached as to what curriculum theorizing activities are desirable and appropriate in which to engage. There are two general schools of thought about the type of theorizing activities which will best promote curriculum theory, but as I describe these two general groups, please bear in mind that not only are there major differences between the two, but there are also major differences within each of the groups. Because of time limitations, however, I am going to concentrate only on the major distinctions between the two groups as I see them rather than the differences within them.

The two general groups are the traditionalists or those with a behavioristic social science orientation and the reconceptualists with a humanistic or artistic orientation to learning. The behavioristic curriculum scholars are represented by Beauchamp (1981), Johnson (1981), Hunkins (1980), and McNeil (1985). They engage in curriculum theorizing activities with a scientific approach. They pursue their work using the behavioral sciences as a model. They work to explain, control, and predict curriculum phenomena much as behavioral scientists want to explain, control, and predict human behavior. The ultimate goal of this group is to have curriculum theory with laws and principles tested through research which will enable curriculum

workers to engage in their activities with a fairly high degree of predictable success.

There is another group of curriculum theorists referred to as the reconceptualists. They reject the behavioral science model for curriculum and are trying, instead, to reconceptualize the field of curriculum using other disciplines such as the arts, literature, religion, and humanistic psychology as a basis for curriculum theorizing. These scholars are represented by Eisner (1985), Pinar (1975), King (1986), William Doll (1986), Zaret (1986), and Wolfson (1977). They define the field in different terms and for different purposes than those scholars with a behavioristic approach. The reconceptualists are not in sympathy with the objective knowledge of curricula which is emphasized by the behaviorists; rather they emphasize the personal and social benefits of learning without the emphasis upon control and prediction in their theoretical attempts. Once again, let me emphasize that there are great variations within these two groups, but at the broadest level of categorization, there is some support for placing curriculum theorists into these groups. Just using these two groups of curriculum theorists will more than fill the time allocation I have for this presentation.

Characteristics of Curriculum Under State Control

As I read the current curriculum literature reflecting the move to state control over education, including the curriculum, I see such ideas and practices as curriculum alignment; curriculum management; achievement testing; direct instruction; higher

academic standards; more rigorous courses; more time on task; more homework; more rigorous, demanding texts; and higher teacher expectations for student achievement being advocated. It is interesting that Cuban (1986) has documented some of these as being persistent patterns of curriculum and instruction for some time, and, thus, they cannot not be considered just the result of recent moves by state legislatures and state departments of education for greater control. In my own state of California, these are very familiar concepts to curriculum workers. There is a very serious effort to align all the aspects of curriculum from goals and objectives, content, materials (primarily textbooks), instruction, and tests so that the outcomes of curriculum will be similar, if not the same, for every student in the state. The so-called model curriculum standards are issused by the State Department of Education and sent to every school district to assist them in curriculum alignment.

This approach to curriculum development has considerable support. There are some proponents who believe that it successfully addresses the need for equality in education for all students (Adler, 1982). They believe that the provision of the same curriculum to be offered to all students resolves the problem of inequality of schooling. Legislators like it because there is some accountability built into tax funds spent on education. Higher test scores mean that the tax dollars were spent in accountable ways with clear outcomes for everyone to acknowledge. Some curriculum workers like it because they believe they finally know what they need to do to build a good curriculum. (I do not disparage these workers because they

receive precious little consistent preparation, if any, in curriculum which helps them know what and how to engage in their responsibilities.) Taxpayers like it because the health and progress of the public schools are reported in terms of standardized test scores which they believe they understand. There is, then, considerable support for the shift in the locus of authority to the state away from the time-honored concept in American education of local control.

Curriculum Theory and State Control

From the point of view of the two groups of curriculum theorists I described above, there are some assumptions and consequences of state control over curriculum which are highly debatable. These assumptions and consequences can be described under five major categories: the nature of knowledge, purposes of the explicit curriculum, messages students receive from the implicit curriculum, what is being omitted from the education or the null curriculum (Eisner, 1985), and the planning of curriculum based upon the fundamental elements of the field. Each of these categories has profound implications for the education of students.

Depending upon where curriculum scholars are in their work in curriculum theorizing (both within a group as well as between the two groups I have identified), support can be mustered for this view of a state dominated curriculum, at least to some degree, or grave dangers can be identified which may have long-range consequences for our future citizens. The remainder of this paper includes a brief discussion of the five categories and some

possible responses to the shift to state control I would expect by some of the representatives of the two broad groups of curriculum theorists. Next, I will identify some myths about curriculum which we must give up with the shift in curriculum control to the state. Finally, I will conclude with my position about the functions of curriculum theory in a time of state control over curriculum.

The Nature of Knowledge

The nature of knowledge being assumed by the state is that knowledge is objective, exists outside of a student, can be carefully defined in advance of classroom work, can be organized sequentially and hierarchically, is best represented by the traditional organized disciplines, and can be evaluated by standardized achievement tests. This view of knowledge would not be objected to very much by the behavioral curriculum theorists; they, too, make such assumptions in their theorizing activities.

The reconceptualists, however, reject this view of knowledge. They believe that until knowledge has personal meaning attached, it is meaningless or nonexistent; they do not believe that knowledge is objective, but subjective. Further, they believe that knowledge cannot be effectively organized in advance of working with students in the classroom except, perhaps, to a minimal degree. Knowledge which is measurable by achievement tests to the reconceptualists is the test authors' view of important knowledge and is likely to have little importance to many, if not most students. It represents only a fraction of the potential knowledge which may be important for students to learn

and is simply the agreement of a small, but powerful, group of adults rather than a shared, wide-spread held consensus about fundamental knowledge which all students must possess. Time spent on such attempts at objectifying knowledge is ill-advised and wasted. It would be better for students to spend their time on topics which are of inherent interest to them or on those they encounter in daily life. It is these to which some personal meaning can be attached and thus, become significant knowledge to the individual.

The Explicit Curriculum

The second category of significant curriculum concepts for a state dominated curriculum I would like to discuss is the explicit curriculum. The explicit curriculum is what is carefully and deliberately planned and taught, and typically emphasizes the attainment of a body of defined content and set of skills which is thought to be basic to survival in our society. Little attention is paid to the personal or social implications of the defined content or the other options for curriculum needed for functioning in a multi-cultural, democratic society. The ends and means of the curriculum are carefully defined, planned for, taught, and tested. Only those ends or goals which can be tested are likely to receive attention. Even those goals which can be evaluated, but not easily tested, will not receive much emphasis from a state dominated curiculum. The curriculum will be restricted to those ends which can be measured - facts, low level thinking skills, and basic skills in reading and math.

This narrowing of the curriculum gives most curriculum

theorists great pause, even those who tend to support the general assumptions undergirding a state curriculum. Behavioristic theorists are not supportive in general of such a narrowly defined curriculum because they recognize the importance of the other aims of the curriculum which are ignored in the current definition of curriculum. The reconceptualists likewise would reject the narrowness, as well as the fundamental assumptions of the state dominated, measured curriculum. It represents only a small fraction of what might be included in a curriculum and what is omitted might well have more importance to the students than what is included. Further, they would reject the notion that curriculum can be thought of as ends and means as in a technological system. This image of curriculum is rejected by them as being totally inappropriate for thinking about purposes of education and people in schools. The curriculum for them cannot be planned or known fully in advance of classroom activities, if ever, and it cannot be adequately assessed by achievement tests. In fact, for many reconceptualists, the concept of the explicit versus the implicit curriculum would be questionable. The concepts suggest a structure to the field which they might find artificial. To them, whatever the student learns is the curriculum; whether it is called the explicit or implicit is probably not an important distinction.

The Implicit Curriculum

There is concern about the implicit curriculum, the third category of significant curriculum concepts, which students may be experiencing with the shift to state control. The implicit curriculum consists of those messages which students learn, often

affective ones, but are not deliberately intended or planned for. They are typically communicated through the values of the educators who run the school, the expectations of teachers, classroom rules and regulations, the kind of place the school is, and interactions with adults and other students, for example. We cannot determine what the implicit curriculum is unless we talk directly to students, but for the purposes of this paper, we can hypothesize about the implicit messages students may be receiving from a state dominated curriculum.

A state dominated curriculum would likely carry the following implicit messages for students:

1. What is important to be learned is determined by someone else and learning means to comply with the expectations of others.

2. What is important in school is measured by achievement tests.

3. Those in authority, the state, know what is best for all students regarding what should be learned. Individual interests and talents are unimportant unless they are taught as organized subjects and tested in the school.

4. Compliance, orderliness, memorization, and respect for authority are important characteristics of good students.

5. Teachers are only concerned with what is to be learned and measured, not with other developmental aspects of students.

Most of these potential messages would be considered as undesirable by curriculum theorists; all are likely to believe that such messages must be critically examined and reshaped. The

concept of the implicit curriculum reminds us that the kind of curriculum we devise will have more powerful outcomes than just what is overtly taught. The implicit curriculum will exist just as surely with a state curriculum as with a curriculum developed at any other level. It might not be any different with local control of schools which adopt similar assumptions about the explicit curriculum, but it would surely be easier to correct the undesirable messages from the implicit curriculum at the local level than at the state level. The state level is too far removed from the individual school to be challenged effectively by a faculty. It would take considerably stronger, collective efforts than those just from a single local school. Thus, undesirable messages are more likely to persist in a state controlled curriculum than in a locally controlled one. Any curriculum, however, will always carry potential implicit messages which must be uncovered and examined, to the extent curriculum workers possibly can, for their desirability just as much as the explicit curriculum.

The Null Curriculum

The fourth category of ideas from curriculum theory has to do with the null curriculum. Eisner (1985) defines this as what is not taught. When the state takes over control of curriculum decision making and demands accountability, there will be a significant null curriculum. The curriculum will be restricted to what can be tested and measured; all else will receive little or no attention. Many important outcomes of schooling which are desired by most people will fall into the null curriculum. Exploration of openended questions, complex issues with a variety

of interpretations, and interesting ideas, for example, will not occur. Pursuit of individual interests and talents will be missing as will any content not included in achievement tests. Affective goals will be neglected, no matter how basic they may be to our multicultural, democratic society. Students will potentially receive little direct help in the classroom in attaining such important goals as learning how to learn, respecting people who are different from themselves, appreciating areas of the arts and their contributions to our daily lives, learning to resolve conflict, and valuing learning for learning's sake. These are important goals which most people want the schools to address. I suspect that both groups of curriculum theorists would be in rather close agreement about the importance of these types of outcomes and would deplore any curriculum decision making which neglects them. Under state control with accountability by achievement test scores, they are not likely to be addressed. They will be relegated to the null curriculum and receive no attention.

Curriculum Planning

The final category which needs considerable discussion is curriculum planning. Much debate is needed about the desirability of what happens to curriculum when decision making for planning is shifted to the state. This category will probably receive most attention from the behavioristic scholars since the reconceptualists do not use many of the elements I am going to use to define the curriculum field.

Some curriculum scholars have identified nine basic

curriculum elements which must be considered in curriculum development (Goodlad, Klein, and Tye, 1979): goals and objectives, content, materials, activities, teaching strategies, evaluation, grouping, time, and space. State control over curriculum planning can be defined in terms of what decisions are made about which elements. Prior to the shift to state control, decisions were made about relatively few of the elements at the state level; materials in the form of textbooks for some states were decided, some goals were mandated, and some tests were given for specific purposes. More of the curriculum elements were reflected in state curriculum guides, but these consisted of recommendations rather than requirements or mandates.

Now the picture has changed considerably. No longer are state guides viewed as recommendations or suggestions, but the so-called guidelines, at least in my state, are being considered as mandates to be met and mandates are being issued about more curriculum elements. Documents are coming down from the California State Department of Education which specify goals and objectives, content in the form of topics to be taught, textbooks which are "recommended" for the elementary school (but carry the weight of state money only if you buy from those listed), tests for all kinds of purposes, the size of some grades and classes, and the amount of time which is to be spent in the classroom on some subjects.

Even those curriculum elements which do not receive explicit attention from state mandates receive certain pressures which cause the school districts in the state to uniformly make decisions about them. There is a domino effect in that as one

decision is made at the state level, it has effects, sometimes far-reaching ones, on other decisions which might be made at the local level. Some of these decisions can have a powerful impact on planning in relation to fundamental curriculum elements. For example, a California state law now mandates that teachers will be evaluated on their instructional skills and that administrators will be helped to develop the necessary skills for this task. Districts have been quick to comply. Most districts are responding by giving help to administrators in evaluating direct instruction almost exclusively. A teacher who uses another teaching strategy is viewed as not exhibiting important skills of teaching, or "different" at best. It is the rare district evaluator which recognizes and rewards alternative ways of teaching and thus, of evaluating teachers. This creates strong pressure for uniformity about teaching stategies which stems from state controls and mandates.

Similarly, certain kinds of learning activities are implicitly valued over others. The quiet, orderly, "productive", teacher-dominated classroom is always evaluated as a better classroom than those where there is some noise and movement, and where students may spend some minutes off-task, perhaps in relating in a personal way to the teacher. The preferred type of classroom is undoubtedly good for some types of objective, measurable outcomes, but if classrooms are always that way, there will be many desirable learnings left unattended; to become part of the null curriculum. Feeling the excitement of learning, making decisions and experiencing their consequences, pursuing

individual interests and talents, and respecting all types of people are examples of goals which will receive short shrift in neat, orderly, quiet, teacher-dominated classrooms.

Thus, the move to state control for curriculum decision making has been very complete. The state now controls either implicitly or explicitly most of the elements of curriculum decision making. The reconceptualists would certainly decry this shift. It is foreign to their fundamental assumptions about the field of curriculum. Very little of it would receive any support from them. They firmly believe that curriculum decision making must be in the hands of the teacher and students within the classroom.

There is little discussion in curriculum theorizing by the behaviorists regarding who ought to make curriculum decisions; most of it is concerned with identifying what decisions must get made. When the who question is discussed, however, the curriculum committee at the local district is usually the focus. Thus, the behavioristic theorists who advocate a systems approach of control and predictability in their theorizing activities would be likely not to agree that curriculum decisions are best made at the state level. In fact, I suspect most of them would be strong advocates of local control. There is precious little local control left for any aspect of curriculum in the current picture.

Curriculum Myths

To the degree my analysis of curriculum control by the state is accurate, it is necessary to give up some of our time-honored beliefs and values for schooling. I would like to identify very

quickly six different beliefs or values which I think must now be viewed only as myths.

The first belief to be challenged is that there is local control over the curriculum. The above paragraphs clearly suggest that the state of California, at least, now makes fundamental decisions about most elements basic to curriculum planning, either overtly or covertly. Local districts feel great pressure to comply with state guidelines and mandates about curriculum. There is not much left for the districts to do in curriculum development but to monitor how well they are doing in response to the state. There is little time or effort devoted to creative work in curriculum development at the local level, nor is there much incentive to do so.

The second myth is that the state will only set some goals or standards to be met and the local district will have the freedom to decide how it will be done. Unfortunately, the type of standards being set by the state direct what the important areas of the curriculum are, how the curriculum will be taught, what types of activities will be engaged in, and how the curriculum will be evaluated. They also strongly structure how time and space will be allocated in classrooms. When accountability by test scores is tied to school recognition; quality indicators are used to match goals and objectives, content, materials, and evaluation; additional state funds are given to those schools with high achievement test scores; and effective instruction is defined as direct instruction and used as the basis for teacher evaluation; little remains for the district, let alone the local

school or teacher, to decide. It takes only the strongest, most defiant administrators and teachers to openly challenge the strong pressures to define curriculum as the states are now doing. We may come to see that those are the educators, however, that we ought to value most.

The third myth is a popular one now - the teacher is to function as a professional decision maker. There is not much left for the teacher to make professional decisions about in curriculum. State control has now decided that the teacher will be a technician. The major task left to the district and teachers is to align the curriculum; that is, to make sure the instructional curriculum being offered is in agreement with the formal curriculum which the state expects and provides. As long as curriculum decision making is not a part of the teacher's basic preparedness, right, and obligation, I do not see how teachers will ever become professionals. State control will assure that teachers perform as good technicians.

The fourth belief that must be challenged is that the state is concerned only with the common curriculum or the basics and the rest will be left up to the local district. The research evidence is very strong in suggesting that the subjects which get tested, get taught. When a student of mine wanted to do some research on the primary social studies program, she was hard-pressed to find some primary teachers who taught social studies. Most teachers indicated they spent their day on reading and math because of the visibility and importance of test scores in those two subject areas. Similarly, when the state university system defines what is necessary to be admitted to their schools,

further pressure is placed on the schools from state mandates. The subjects required for admission to the state university quickly become the curriculum for virtually all high school students. State mandates and expectations are very powerful in determining what will be taught - and not taught. They have become the dominant factor in what the curriculum will be. Only the very strongest and most concerted pressures will off-set the mandates from the state.

Fifth, the search for alternative paradigms as bases for schooling must be given up if state control is accepted. The industrial, technological model is the exlusive view of schooling now. Students are the raw materials; teachers are the workers; and the educated, economically productive citizen is the finished product. It is hard to see that any other view of schooling is reflected in any fundamental way. Although some curriculum theorists such as Eisner (1985) present very powerful arguments for why the paradigm of the industrial world is not compatible with good education, schools are now completely dominated by that single view - the school as a factory. As long as that paradigm holds sway, the school will be the assembly line, the teacher will be the worker, and the curriculum as defined by the state will be the necessary operations to produce students as standardized products. Other paradigms as a basis for thinking about schooling will not be relevant.

Sixth, we must examine more closely the belief that curriculum change will occur by a top-down strategy. McLaughlin and Marsh (1978) and others have clearly challenged this belief

with their research. The top-down approach is not the most effective strategy for curriculum change and in fact, the changes (if any) made with this strategy are always disappointingly small and usually temporary. Teachers must be directly involved in curriculum change and must somehow buy into the desired changes to really effect them. It must not be assumed that they are simply technicians waiting to carry out "orders" if any significant and lasting changes are expected. Changes using this view of reform are usually blounted on the classroom door (Goodlad, Klein, and Associates, 1974). Teachers must be made partners, or at least, be given some well-defined role in the curriculum development process or else the attempted changes mandated from the state will likely prove to be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.

The belief that succesful state-mandated, top-down approaches to desired curriculum changes will become a shared common perception and goal by all those educators involved in curriculum reform reflects a very naive view. Such a view is challenged by the work of some curriculum theorists. For example, the Study of Schooling curriculum model includes five different perspectives which can be held about curriculum expectations and decision making, all of which have the potential of being quite different even about the same curriculum phemomena (Goodlad, Klein, and Tye, 1979). It includes the formal curriculum, in part what is mandated by the state, and the instructional perspective, the teacher's view and plans for the curriculum. The research evidence strongly suggests that these two perspectives are often not in agreement in relation to the same

desired change. Thus, teachers who may not be resistant to state mandates, or may even be supportive of them, do not necessarily implement them in their classrooms for a variety of reasons. The top-down change strategy being used in the move to state control of the curriculum is another myth we must dispell.

Functions of Curriculum Theory in a Time of State Control

In conclusion, I would like to make a bit clearer what my views and hopes are about curriculum theory in a time of state control. Walker (1982) has stated that the field of curriculum will be best served by curriculum <u>theories</u>, not one single curriculum theory. This view is widely shared by other curriculum scholars and is one I believe to be very important. Even though I have a preference for one type of curriculum theorizing, my work is significantly enhanced through the study of other approaches. For example, the behaviorists help me in planning important aspects of curriculum in relation to certain kinds of curriculum goals which are desired. Many of these are also the types of changes desired by the state, but which in my opinion can best be attended to at the local level. I draw upon the theorizing activities of the behaviorists for some of my curriculum endeavors, and strongly agree with their implicit assumption that such work occurs better at the local rather than at the state level.

The reconceptualists help me, too, by their insistence that until knowledge has some personal meaning, it does not provide the power we want it to have for students. There are some aspects of curriculum on which I agree with them that decisions

are best made by the teacher and students at the classroom level. Their view of education is more closely related to other kinds of curriculum goals such as the development of individual talents and interests and skills in independent study which persistently remain a part of our hopes and expectations for schooling.

Curriculum theory, then, is not an either/or choice which I may have inadvertently suggested in this paper. Rather, it is using some theories for some purposes of schooling and other theories for other purposes. Learning is a very complex act which occurs under different circumstances and for different purposes for individual learners. To try to reduce what is important about that process to only one type of theory when we engage in curriculum activities is to reduce the complexity of being human to a simplistic, predictable condition. I do not think we can do that and I think we are poorly served by selectively using only one theory of learning and one set of curriculum theorizing activities as a basis for curriculum development in order to achieve all the outcomes desired from schooling. Further, I believe that the local district and school are the most fundamental sites for curriculum development. Schooling clearly is a concern of both the state and the individual. But it is at the local level that the needs and interests of the state and the individual student can best be integrated into the curriculum, not at the state level. The fundamental and multiple outcomes that we want our students to attain through the curriculum require the best of all the approaches to curriculum theories made at the level where the individual student will not be forgotten.

The shift to state control of the curriculum is not a benign transfer of power. It has many implications and will affect the curriculum in fundamental ways - in some ways which are not directly supported by most curriculum theorists from either group I discussed in this paper. To reverse this shift is an essential task in my opinion, but it will not be an easy one. It will require the efforts of all curriculum theorists and of even more powerful educators who view the shift as I perceive most curriculum theorists do. The shift back to the local districts and individual school, however, is of fundamental importance to the quantity and quality of education which our students will receive from the schools. They deserve no less than our best efforts to reverse the trend toward state mandated curriculum to local control.

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